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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, July 9, 1934.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Points on Preserving Berries." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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The housewives of Brittany have the reputation for being the thriftiest in all France, for letting nothing go to waste in their gardens or kitchens. So, travelers are always surprised to see that no one gathers the blackberries that grow so thickly along Brittany roads. Each summer the fruit ripens and falls to the ground, undisturbed. Frugal as they are, the Bretons are still more devout. And remembering the crown of thorns, they consider all fruit unholy which comes from a thorn-bearing bush.

But in our country, such fruit is a matter of gratitude to Providence. For blackberries and raspberries and gooseberries provide some of America's most famous dishes. To many of us, summer just wouldn't be summer without blackberry pie. And think of all the Americans, big and little, who have grown up on the tradition of bread and jam as a treat -- blackberry or raspberry or gooseberry jam. A more recent berry dish that promises to take a place among the favorites is raspberry ice or sherbet. Manufacturers report that raspberry sherbet is growing more popular every day. Before long it may be our favorite frozen dessert.

As for the wild berries, they have been some of nature's kindest gifts to us since the earliest settlers arrived in this country. Wild blackberries and raspberries have been a welcome summer treat on American dinner tables in the rich man's country home and the poor mountaineer's cottage. In recent years these wild berries have helped out the income of many rural families. For example, a group of farm women in West Virginia are now doing a good business in homemade wild blackberry jam. They put it up in individual-size containers -- jars just large enough to serve one person at a meal, and they sell it to one of the railroad companies for dining-car use. Women in other parts of the country have built up good markets for their berry jams and preserves by selling them at curb markets and roadside stands and by getting orders from hotels and tea-rooms.

Well, since the berry season is in full swing, I've gathered for you some points on preserving these bramble-bush fruits, both wild and cultivated. Since so many people are doing their own preserving this year, I think you'll be interested in what the canning specialists have to say about the best ways to save your berries for winter.

First, about canning. You can can berries as you can other fruit either in glass jars or tin cans. If you use tin cans, remember to use only those that have a special enamel lining. Red fruits lose their color when heated in contact with tin, but the special enamel lining prevents this trouble. Either No. 2 or No. 3 sanitary or R-enameled cans are right for putting up berries. As for glass jars, use either the pint or quart size.

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You can can berries in two ways. You can put the fresh berries directly into the containers and pour boiling sirup over them and then put them in the hot-water bath to process. Or you can just cook them a few minutes with sugar in an open kettle, and then process for five minutes in the water-bath. The first method is the easiest, of course, but sometimes the berries shrink so much in processing that the containers aren't well filled and the berries float. Cooking in the kettle first will prevent this trouble.

Do you ever use a pressure canner for processing berries? Answer: Not if you're wise. Since berries are acid, boiling temperature is sufficient to sterilize them. Cooking under pressure will over cook these delicate fruits.

Now a point or two about making jams and preserves and so on. Because sugar helps preserve the color and flavor, and also the shape of the fruit, these spreads, rich in sugar, have always been popular ways of preserving berries. Many people think that a bright sparkling preserve is more attractive than the plain canned product. Also it's an easier way to preserve the fruit than canning. If you are making jams or preserves, jellies or marmalades or conserves, there's one good rule to remember at the beginning. This is: Cook rapidly in a wide shallow kettle without a lid, and never overcook. Some foods need long slow cooking, but not preserves. You see, the more rapid the evaporation here, the better to save their color and flavor. Long, slow cooking darkens and dulls the natural color of the fruit and changes its flavor. The continuation of heat and sugar shrivels and also toughens the berries until they're like hard knots. Whenever you hear somebody say that she objects to blackberry jam because it's so "goody" you can be pretty sure she cooks her jam too long. Remember not to boil down these sweet concoctions; boil them only to the jellying stage. Then they won't lose their best qualities.

Let's just run through the making of berry jam briefly to illustrate what we've been saying. First, wash and pick over the berries. Then crush and heat them in a kettle. If you're really opposed to seeds, cook the fruit for a short while, and then put it through a sieve and remove the seeds. Add the sugar, and heat to boiling, stirring all the time. Use $3/4$ pound of sugar to each pound of prepared fruit. The specialists say that measuring by weight gives better results in preserving than measuring by quarts or cups. So, use $3/4$ pound of sugar to each pound of prepared berries. Of course, you never add water or other liquid with such juicy fruits. Cook rapidly now until the mixture reaches the jelly test. Pour the jam into hot sterilized jars and seal.

Since gooseberries are more sour than blackberries and raspberries, you'll probably want more sugar in gooseberry jam. The large, most perfect berries are best for canning. The next in quality are good for jams and preserves. The culls -- those that aren't quite ripe or are too small -- these you can make into juice, either to use in canning or to bottle for later use.

If you have only small amounts of berries, you can often make the most of them by combining different varieties in a conserve. Black raspberries and cherries together make a delicious conserve. Red raspberries and currants are also delicious cooked together.

Generally, raspberries and blackberries won't do for jelly unless you add acid, but gooseberries have the right combination of pectin and acid for a fine jelly--and a beautiful one. Gooseberry jelly at its best is a lovely pinkish red.

Let's plan a meal using some of the gooseberry or blackberry jam we've just made. The menu: Lamb and pork patties; Corn on the cob; Tomatoes and okra, cooked together; Whole wheat muffins; and for dessert, Washington pie, which is really a layer cake with jam spread between the layers.

